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TAGS: [SNAR](#) [PINS](#) [PGOV](#) [KCOR](#) [KCRM](#) [GY](#)
SUBJECT: SECRET TAPE, RAID ON DRUG LORD'S ASSETS ROCK GUYANA

REF: A. GEORGETOWN 234
[1](#)B. GEORGETOWN 205
[1](#)C. GEORGETOWN 112
[1](#)D. GEORGETOWN 111

Classified By: Charge d'Affaires Michael D. Thomas
For reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) SUMMARY. Georgetown is flush with intrigue as a joint army/police team conducted raids March 19-20 on drug lord Shaheed "Roger" Khan's properties and, concurrently, a secret recording of Police Commissioner Winston Felix's phone conversations was anonymously and widely distributed to the media, GoG, private sector, and diplomatic missions. Theories abound as to the motives and linkages behind these events, but no conclusive explanations have emerged yet. However, one thing is clear - the power struggle between narco-trafficking interests and the Guyanese state has escalated to a new level. END SUMMARY.

Army/Police Joint Operation Targets Khan's Properties

[1](#)2. (U) The Guyana Defence Force (GDF) and Guyana Police Force (GPF) conducted a joint operation March 19 and 20, targeting homes and businesses belonging to Guyana's top drug lord Shaheed "Roger" Khan. The GDF spearheaded the operation, with the GPF in tow to make arrests and ensure chain of custody for seized evidence.

[1](#)3. (C) The GDF claims that the operation was part of its attempt to recover the 33 AK-47s and other weapons that disappeared from the GDF headquarters' armory one month ago (ref B). Given Khan's known role as a large-scale weapons trafficker, it seems unlikely that he would resort to stealing weapons from the GDF. It is more plausible that the GDF wanted to counteract the growing impunity with which criminal organizations are operating in Guyana. Post sources indicate the operation was a scattershot effort in hopes of finding anything incriminating. Regardless of the motive, Post believes the operation succeeded in penetrating criminal organizations' comfort zones and, specifically, ratcheting up the pressure on Khan.

¶4. (C) According to public reports, the joint team has seized cocaine and illegal firearms and detained nineteen people and 175 vehicles. In March 20 meeting with Charge and UK and Canada High Commissioners, Minister of Home Affairs Gail Teixeira added that the operation netted 41 kilograms of cocaine, GPF and GDF uniforms, computers, and sophisticated communications intercept equipment. The GDF has custody of the seized items and has requested USG assistance with forensic analysis - particularly of the computers. Post has offered Teixeira such assistance in writing and is making necessary arrangements with LEGATT.

¶5. (C) Khan's whereabouts are unknown. Teixeira said he must have been tipped off to the raid, even though the GDF planned the operation unbeknownst to both GPF and Teixeira.

Secret Tape of Police Commissioner's Phone Call Released

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¶6. (C) A taped conversation between GPF Commissioner Winston Felix and opposition party PNC/R executive committee member Basil Williams was anonymously and widely distributed March 20 to the media, GoG, private sector, and diplomatic missions. Post was already familiar with a shorter version of the tape, which appears to be a Khan production. Khan had for some time been seeking an outlet for the tape; the Ambassador and DCM discussed it with Teixeira March 10 (ref A). Khan was pushing the spin that the longer recording implicates Felix in deliberately misdirecting the investigation into the recent murders at Agricola (ref B), leading to the conclusion that Felix should be sacked and replaced by (the notoriously corrupt) Deputy Police Commissioner/Crime Chief Henry Greene.

¶7. (U) Reaction to the tape from the media and GoG has been surprisingly muted so far. Teixeira released a statement that the GoG was "deeply disturbed about the circulation and broadcast" of the tape, which had "implications for national security". The media's cautiousness partly derives from a sense that there is a lot they do not know rather than from lack of interest. More attention has been paid to the potential origins and the security implications of the tape - how and why were the Police Commissioner's phone calls recorded. The press has even speculated that Khan has intercept equipment capable of producing such a tape.

¶8. (U) The taped conversation itself spans a variety of topics - including the GPF's response to the Agricola murders, the upcoming national elections, and Ronald Waddell's execution (refs B and D). However, the conversation does not seem to contain incriminating statements. It does contain a frank, expletive-laced discussion between the Police Commissioner and a senior opposition politician about serious criminal activities. The tape actually captures Felix making some reasonable comments - such as, "some people don't understand, you know once you want to play with violence, violence will have to surround you". Certainly the tape may be embarrassing for the conversants and their bosses, but it does not actually implicate anyone in anything. The tape is a tool in Khan's plot to get rid of Felix because the commissioner is intent on fighting organized crime.

¶9. (S) Ambassador spoke early March 20 with Norman McLean - former Commissioner of Police and former head of the GDF - regarding the tape. McLean said that President Jagdeo had heard the tape and that Felix would be offered early retirement. Greene, who has a heavily tarnished reputation and a relationship with Khan, is the logical choice to replace Felix. Post is seeking Department concurrence to have Greene's visa revoked on those grounds.

¶10. (S) Charge and UK and Canadian High Commissioners met with Teixeira evening of March 20. Teixeira agreed that given the dubious origins of the tape and likelihood that it

had been edited before its release, there should be due consideration before any decisions are taken regarding Felix's continued employment. However, Teixeira also indicated that the tape and Felix's future would be a major subject on the agenda for the March 21 Cabinet meeting and that she could not guarantee that cooler heads would prevail.

Charge and the High Commissioners indicated that there would be serious difficulties for continued bilateral police cooperation if Greene were named Police Commissioner. Teixeira concurred that Greene would be a problem for many reasons and asked for assistance in leaking to the media the fact that the tape originated with Khan.

¶11. (S) As of March 23, Felix's position is still vulnerable, but improving. Teixeira told Charge March 22 that she "got things on a more even keel" at the Cabinet meeting. Sources indicate a meeting/confrontation between President Jagdeo and Felix occurred March 21, during which Jagdeo demanded that Felix retract certain statements that could be interpreted as implying GoG involvement with the tape. Felix refused, and he apparently also refused to take early retirement. Sacking Felix would require investigation and action by the Disciplined Services Commission. Given the lack of serious impropriety on the longer version of the tape and the lack of concern from the media and the public regarding Felix's remarks as recorded, it seems unlikely that a call for an investigation of Felix would gain much traction. The bottom line is that the general public thinks that whatever Felix said in his private conversations makes for a relatively innocuous indiscretion compared to secretly recording phone calls of senior government officials.

Comment

¶12. (S) The release of the secret tape within a day of the GDF/GPF raid on Khan's properties is an unlikely coincidence.

Khan reportedly despises Felix because he is resistant to Khan's control. It is almost certain that Khan wants Felix replaced by someone more pliable - someone like Greene. Even though Felix was not the driving force behind the raid on Khan (GDF Chief of Staff Edward Collins was), releasing the tape was probably Khan's (or his associates') way of fighting back. If that was Khan's strategy, it has backfired so far.

¶13. (C) Comment continued. The role of McLean and fellow Private Sector Commission leader Jerry Gouveia in spreading word of the tape is also troubling. Gouveia in particular has played the role of Khan's cheerleader in recent weeks, vouching for the legitimacy of the tape and Khan himself. It is unclear whether these eminent figures sought to discredit Felix simply because they think he is incompetent or for a less benign reason. Teixeira has told Charge and UK and Canada High Commissioners that Gouveia and McLean enjoy a very close relationship with and ready access to President Jagdeo, including the ability "to pick up the telephone and call him at any time", which implies an uncomfortably convenient link between Jagdeo and Khan. END COMMENT.

THOMAS